

Eric Von Schmidt was always one of those guys who kind of fell beneath the radar. In fact more people probably know of Eric Von Schmidt as the guy Bob first learned "Baby Let Me Follow You Down" from than for anything Von Schmidt ever did which is kind of a shame, but sometimes that's the way it is and Eric probably wouldn't have had it any other way either because he always played it kind of low key like, and any way he was an illustrator and a good one of some repute.

But Von Schmidt was always the guiding light of the Boston/Cambridge folk scene which took place more in Cambridge than it did in Boston, because he was a folk singer and blues singer practically before anyone knew what a folk singer was. But he always made records, first for Folkways and later for an equally small label called Prestige that put out as many good records as any label did, but now you gotta search for 'em. One of those records that came out in sometime smack dab in the middle of the '60s probably right around the time Bob changed everything not all that far from Boston in this place called Newport was called "Eric Sings Von Schmidt" and it showed that this guy who everyone thought was just this blues singer could write pretty good songs himself like "Joshua Gone Barbados" which Tom Rush turned in a folk radio standard and Bob himself recorded with the Band in that Basement somewhere in the misty Catskills. There was a lot of good songs on that album, which Richard Farina himself wrote the liner notes for like this chilling blues ballad "Cold Grey Dawn" and "My Love Come Rolling Down" but it was one of those things where only the people who knew about them knew about them. Part of the reason for this was that Eric was a pretty hip cat in the true sense of the word, and one of the things about hip was that it wasn't for everyone. It was for the special few. Of course things changed and hip got corrupted by big companies and Time magazine and evil forces like that. But what I'm talkin' about was a different time and place, that time when music was in the cafes at night and revolution was in the air.

Anyway Eric Von Schmidt made a few more records and Bob Dylan even wrote the liner notes for one of them in a pretty funny parody of Johnny Cash's "Nashville Skyline" notes. I thought I had those liner notes around here somewhere, but they ain't where I thought they was, but I do remember that Bob wrote that Eric can "play the commotion of the ocean" which as far as I'm concerned is a pretty high recommendation right there.

Eric Von Schmidt can't sing any more, but recently someone went lookin' in a closet somewhere and discovered an Eric Von Schmidt album that well, kind of got put in a closet somewhere and was kind of forgotten about till now. It's called "Living On The Trail" and just came out on the recently resurrected Tomato label. It was recorded a long time ago, 31 years in fact up in Bearsville, New York, which is one of the many pieces of Woodstock, New York, and it has some pretty famous people who lived up there playin'

on it like Rick Danko and Garth Hudson for two, and Maria Muldaur for three. And it also has Amos Garrett who is one of the greatest guitar players ever to walk this earth and Christopher Parker who was there at the beginning of the Never Ending Tour and Geoff Muldaur who was around back then, disappeared for a while and is back playing today.

There's all kinds of songs on it and today some might seem pretty silly, and others like "Lost in the Woods" might not grab ya first though if you give 'em a chance they eventually will. Eric can be kind of crazy sometimes, and he has this laid back way of singing that can be really beautiful on songs like "Stick To Rum," and the re-make of "Joshua Gone Barbados," and "Stewball" which is kind of half-Leadbelly, half-Von Schmidt with Garth playin' pump organ and Maria singing harmony.

This isn't a fancy slick record. It's the kind of record people used to make a long time ago before a record had to sell 90 million copies for anyone to know about it. Basically it has the feel of people making music because they want to and because they're having fun - kind of like what goes on here on Tuesday nights.